Appendix C: Prologue and Epilogue to the Tragedy of De Montfort *from the Larpent Version*

[The manuscripts in the Larpent collection at the Huntington Library were those submitted to John Larpent (1741-1824), Examiner of Plays from 1778 to 1824, in accordance with a British law passed in 1737. These manuscripts, which were in his possession at the time of his death, were sold to a private collector in 1832. The Huntington Library purchased them in 1917. See Dougald Macmillan, *Catalogue of the Larpent Plays in the Huntington Library*. San Marino: Huntington Library, 1939.]

Theatre Royal Drury Lane April 26th 1800

Prologue

By Hon. F. North

Too long has fancy led her fairy Dance,
Thro' all the various mazes of Romance;
On classic ground her motley standard rear'd
While honest nature blush'd, and disappear'd—
O, Shame!—Why borrow from a foreign store?
As if the rich should pilfer from the poor.—
We who have forc'd th' astonish'd world to yield,
Led by immortal Shakspeare to the Field;—
Whose lines? have felt all tender Otway's woe,
Have glow'd with Dryden, & have wept with Rowe.—
And we, their sons, now dull & senseless grown,
When all the realm of Comedy's our own?
Congreve and Vanbrugh? boast eternal Fame,
And living Authors, we forbear to name.
Should you approve, on this auspicious day
The British Drama reassumes her sway.
Ye men, be candid to a virgin muse,—

To move you more,—Perhaps a woman sues:[1]
Let her Dramatic saplin[2] 'scape your rage,
And spare this tender scyon[3] of the Stage—
Support the infant Tree, ye pitying fair
Protect its blossoms from the blighting air,—
So may its leaves move gently with your sighs,
Its branches flourish water'd by your Eyes.—

Epilogue

By Duchess of Devonshire

Ere yet affections Tears have ceas'd to flow
I come to cherish, not forget my woe
No kindred heart will bid me check the tear
A sister's love may claim protection here.
Dire is the passion that our scenes unfold
And foreign to each heart of British mould
For Britons Sons their generous code maintain
Prompt to defend & slow in giving pain.
Warm in the Battle, yet the contest o'er
They deem to vanquish'd to be foes no more.
Sure with compassion then this night they'll view
De Montfort's fate, it's ruthless court pursue,
And mourn a nature once by honour grac'd
By one foul deed's atrocious guilt defac'd.
To court your smiles & win your hop'd applause
Ah! let me proudly boast my Sex's cause
A Female Muse triumphant has design'd
A paragon indeed of woman kind!
Has in this fair majestic portrait wove
Commanding wisdom, & devoted Love
And bade e'en strength & tenderness agree
In maiden meditation—fancy free.

1 To pursue or woo.
2 Perhaps a variant of sapling.
3 A shoot or twig, also heir or descendant.

Yet tho' she fail'd a Brother to controul
And soothe the frantic troubles of his soul
Will be the Lesson of tonight impress
To wake the judgement & to calm the breast
To check by strong example's potent spell
And each advance of subtle passion quell.
E'en in these happier times where restless rage
Nor dark revenge, no fatal conflicts wage
Where mild reflection heals the transient strife
And smoothy flows the tranquil course of life:—
Yet may our Muse with timely voice impart
Some wholsome Lesson to the erring heart
May check fell vengeance for a past offence
And from the suff'ring mind remove suspense.
Thus turn not heedless from the scene tho' pass'd
Nor view in vain distructive passion's blast,
But cherish ties, for which 'tis life to live
Enjoy the good your Love & kindness give
Banish from Friendship each offending fear
And from confiding Love the doubtful tear
Such the bright picture which the contrast shews
Such the reverse of hatred's deadly woes
Thus let us bid the scenes dread horror cease
And hail the blessing of Domestic peace.

Appendix D: William Wordsworth

1. "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800)

i. Paragraphs 6–9

The principal object then which I proposed to myself in these Poems was to make the incidents of common life interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Low and rustic life was generally chosen because in that situation the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that situation our elementary feelings exist in a state of greater simplicity and consequently may be more accurately contemplated and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings; and from the necessary character of rural occupations are more easily comprehended; and are more durable; and lastly, because in that situation the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. The language too of these men is adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust) because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the action of social vanity they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions. Accordingly such a language arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings is a more permanent and a far more philosophical language than that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets, who think that they are conferring honour upon themselves and their art in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression in order to furnish food for fickle tastes and fickle

Appendix E: Contemporary Reviews

1. *Literary Leisure* 1 (Jan. 1800): 221–34

No. 19: Thursday, January 30, 1800

A PERFECT tragedy has been deemed the noblest triumph of human intellect; and indeed, when one considers the nice discrimination of character, the knowledge of the heart of man, the power of arresting attention and exciting interest, that is required in a writer of tragedy, one cannot so much wonder that so many have failed, as that any have at all succeeded. An epic poet, when he has once arranged his plan, can supply by narrative or description the blanks in character and sentiment. He can call in the aid of super-natural machinery—nay, it is even a part of his business so to do, in order to facilitate events sufficiently out of the common way, to excite wonder by their grandeur, and curiosity about their termination. It is much easier to make a man act than think—it is much easier to develop the workings of his mind in a series of lines in the author's own person … than to put into the mouth of each character those very words which display the feelings themselves, and not only the feelings and passions themselves, but with that peculiar discrimination which marks the individual.

There is, perhaps, a regular progress common to all great passions; but it is marked by very distinct shades in the breasts of every different person. No two people would perhaps express emotion in the same manner, or be guided by similar feeling to similar conduct. To mark these variations of character with all their delicate traits of diversity, is more peculiarly the province of the dramatic writer. The aim of tragedy is in general to surprise, to elevate the mind, to affect the feelings, and interest the curiosity of the spectator. For this purpose a grand and uncommon incident is usually selected, distinguished personages are made the victims of misfortune, and exalted sentiments are clothed in poetical imagery. There are undoubtedly many of them fine poems;—whether they are peculiarly entitled to the

term *dramatic*, I do not mean to enquire; but they are certainly less calculated to interest the heart, than those ruder structures, built by the hands of our immortal Shakespeare, where probability is frequently violated in the incidents, and disregarded in the conclusion—where poetical imagery is perpetually sacrificed to the jingle of words, and the most sublime sentiments too often debased by an irresistible conceit; but where individual truth of character is inviolably preserved.

Some dramatic writers, conscious of the want of interest in the more regular tragedies, have daringly overleaped all bounds, and imitated Shakespeare in his transgressions of the rules alone. But, however the man who wishes to write a drama, feels inclined to complain of the difficulties imposed on him by the arbitrary laws of critics, he may rest assured, that it is much easier to compress an incident into a given portion of time, and to contract it into a certain space, than to make the characters speak at once the language of nature and of passion….

… however it may be the business of dramatic writings to elevate the mind, and interest the feelings, they have a higher task to perform, to which the others bear only the proportionable value of being the best means to promote the more desirable end. It is surely their business to inculcate right sentiments, and promote the diffusion of virtue; and what mode of writing is so well adapted to convey right impressions with such powerful and general effect? This is a point, however, which, for a considerable time, has never seemed to occur to any author. Writers have rather considered their own powers, than the beneficial effect their labours might produce. Shakespeare himself, so capable of tracing the spring and progress of passion, of marking the almost insensible motives which operate to produce a deviation from virtue, has been far from making it the settled principle of his plays. He wrote from the impulse of the moment, and the desultory and vague style of his plots sufficiently proves that, however those master-strokes of nature might occur to him in the unfolding of the incidents, the incidents were by no means imagined with a view to produce those undeniable proofs of his exquisite researches into the human heart. Had Shakespeare formed such a plan, how

might the world have benefited! It remained, however, for the present age to produce a genius capable of conceiving such an idea, and hardy enough to attempt its execution with no inadequate pen. My readers will instantly see that I allude to "A Series of Plays." The specimen already before the Public gives the most glowing promise of the success of the whole; the preliminary dissertation exhibits a depth of reasoning, an acuteness of penetration, an accuracy of observation, not often to be met with.

In reading that excellent essay, one is tempted to regret, that so much beautiful imagery, and glowing colouring should be thrown away on a prose discourse. Poetical beauties are scattered over it with a profusion which would have enriched a long poem, and which the author, with unsparing hand, uses to illustrate a disquisition, whose intrinsic merit would have been a sufficient recommendation. No one can doubt the ability of the writer for the self-imposed task—no one can imagine a clearer eye to distinguish those small beginnings of passion, which "are as when a man letteth out water."[1] The remarks on the eagerness with which people of all descriptions watch indications of character, and symptoms of agitation, must come home to the heart of every individual; and with what beautiful, what affecting solemnity, and what exquisite precision are described the effects on the mind of the observer, of the discovery of such tumultuous passions existing in the breast of a fellow-creature!

... this so interesting research into the heart of man, is performed with a clearness and precision that undeniably award to dramatic writings the preference in this difficult, though most engaging task. To the dramatist it alone belongs to represent man—Novelists, poets, historians, may describe him,—but he describes himself in a well-executed drama. The impulses of passion mark themselves by words too minute to become the subject of observation to the historian; and though sometimes seized by the Novelist, the general fear that they should escape the attention of the reader, causes them to be beat and hammered out till they cover an incalculable surface of paper. When a minute indication of nature is thus displayed with artifice and ostentation, you may remember the eloquence of the writer, but interest is excited no longer.

1 Proverbs 17:14.

When, in the swellings of his heart over the lost Cordelia, Lear interrupts the moanings of the father with the abrupt request to an attendant,—"Pray you undo this button!" what bosom of feeling does not throb in sympathy with the venerable King's? What description could so forcibly have excited the consciousness of that bursting agony, that at length mastered the powers of life.

This ingenious and reflecting writer justly observes that tragedians have in general selected "strong outlines of character, bold features of passion, and striking dramatic situations,"—thus neglecting "those smaller touches of nature, which so well develop the mind;"—and after shewing how much more interest is to be excited, and how much more good produced by "unveiling the mind under the dominion of those strong and fixed passions which, seemingly unprovoked by outward circumstance, will from small beginnings brood within the breast, till all the better dispositions, all the fair gifts of nature are borne down before them,"—proceeds to an investigation of the different species of comic dramas. The remarks here are equally judicious and acute, and produce a similar conviction in the mind of the reader, of the power possessed by the author of this dissertation to form a new era in dramatic poetry, and rescue the stage from the unmeaning ribaldry and high-flown heroics which too often disgrace it. The unfolding of the plan, of which the three plays now before the public, form but a small part, strikes the mind as grand, noble, and highly laudable; nor can a doubt arise of the capability of the author to execute a project which none but a superior genius could have been capable of forming, which does honour to the present age, and will sufficiently clear it from the imputation, equally disgraceful, of frivolous levity, or metaphysical absurdity.

At a period, when many people are prostituting splendid talents in the pursuit of wild and pernicious chimeras, involving themselves in the bewildering clouds of modern philosophy,

and broaching speculations and opinions which threaten to overturn all moral relations and all social order—when others (perhaps a subordinate link in the same great chain of modern sophistry) endeavour to debase the public taste to spectacles of mere show and pageantry, substituting the puerility of fairy tales, and the exploded horrors of romance, for delineations of human nature, and bold pictures of character,—it is some comfort to advocate for the dignity of the species, to find an individual arise, who can calmly look down on the frivolous or pernicious pursuits of the literary world, and, with a firm and vigorous pencil, can at once form a bold outline, and fill it up with truth and correctness.

From the Blue Beards, the Pizarros, the Castle Spectres of the English stage,[1] from the wild ravings of the German drama, and the lax morality thence incorporated with our theatrical exhibitions, from the mummery of pageantry, and the cant-words of comedy, it is a welcome relief to turn to the page where the powers of the mind find real exercise—where the feeling heart subscribes to the truth of the portrait—where the powers of a Siddons[2] and a Jordan[3] will find adequate employment—and where the embellishments of poetry are made subservient to the noblest purposes.

It must be the sincere wish of every lover of literary merit, that the author of these admirable performances would emerge from retirement, and lest the world know whither to address the applause they have excited; but it is to be hoped that it will not be long ere conscious merit will boldly face the day....

1 Blue Beard is the villain of Charles Perrault's 1697 tale "Barbe-bleue" upon which numerous burlesques and dramatizations were based, such as George Colman the Younger's (1762–1836) *Bluebeard* (1798). *Pizarro* (1799), a tragedy based on a German play by August Friedrich Ferdinand von Kotzebue (1761–1819) about the Spanish conqueror of Peru, Francisco Pizarro (1478–1541), was the most popular of Richard Brinsley Sheridan's (1751–1816) later plays. *The Castle Spectre* is Matthew Lewis's (1775–1818) highly successful gothic drama, first performed at Drury Lane Theatre on December 14, 1797.

2 Sarah Siddons (1755–1831), sister of John Philip Kemble, was a leading actor of her day.

3 Dorothy Jordan (1761–1816) was a popular comic actor.

2. *Edinburgh Review* 4 (July 1803): 269–86

[This review by Francis Jeffrey appeared as the lead article.]

THESE plays require a double criticism; first, as to the merit of the peculiar plan upon which they are composed; and, secondly, as to their own intrinsic excellence.

To such peculiar plans, in general, we confess that we are far from being partial; they necessarily exclude many beauties, and ensure nothing but constraint: the only plan of a dramatic writer should be, to please and to interest as much as possible; but when, in addition to this, he resolves to write upon nothing but scriptural subjects, or to imitate the style of Shakespeare, or to have a siege, or the history of a passion in every one of his pieces, he evidently cuts himself off from some of the means of success, puts fetters upon the freedom of his own genius, and multiplies the difficulties of a very arduous undertaking.

The writer of the pieces before us, has espoused the patronage of what she has been pleased to call *characteristic truth*, as the great charm of dramatic composition; and, in order to magnify its importance, has degraded all the other requisites of a perfect drama to the rank of very weak and unprofitable auxiliaries. With a partiality not at all unusual in the advocates of a peculiar system, she admits, indeed, that a play may have qualities that give nearly as much pleasure; but maintains, that this is altogether owing to the *folly* of mankind, and that if we were constituted as we ought to be, we should care very little for any thing but the just representation of character in our dramatic performances this sentiment, we think, is pretty clearly expressed, in the following passage of the "Introductory Discourse," prefixed to the former volume.

> Our love of the grand, the beautiful, the novel, and above all of the marvellous, is very strong; and if we are richly fed with what we have a good relish for, we may be weaned to forget our native and favourite aliment: yet we can never so far forget it, but that we shall cling to, and acknowledge it again, whenever it is presented before us.

> In a work abounding with the marvellous and unnatural, if the author has any how stumbled upon an unsophisticated genuine stroke of nature, we will immediately perceive and be delighted with it, though we are *foolish enough*, at the same time, to admire all the nonsense with which it is surrounded.

Now, we really cannot perceive why the admiration of novelty and grandeur should be considered as more foolish, than the admiration of just sentiments, or consistent character. The same power that gave us a relish for the one, formed us to be delighted with the other; and the wisdom that guides us, to the gratification of the first propensity can scarcely condemn our indulgence in the second. Where the object is to give pleasure, nothing that pleases can be foolish; and a striking trait of characters, or of nature, will only please the more, when it occurs in a performance, which has already delighted us with its grandeur, its novelty, and its beauty. The skilful delineation of character, is no doubt among the highest objects of the drama, but this has been so generally admitted, that it was the less necessary to undervalue all the rest. The true object of the drama, is to interest and delight; and this it can frequently accomplish, by incident, as effectually as by character. There are innumerable *situations* that excite our sympathy in the strongest degree, though the character of those who are placed in them be left almost entirely to be filled up from our general conceptions of human nature. Mothers bereaved of their children; lovers separated or restored to each other; the young and valiant cut off by untimely death; tyrants precipitated from their thrones; and many other occurrences or representations, are capable of awakening the highest interest, and the most anxious curiosity, although the character should be drawn only with these vague and undistinguishing features that fancy has associated with the situation.

But, even if we could agree with Miss Baillie that the striking delineation of character was the cardinal excellence of the drama, we should find great difficulty in admitting that her plan was the most likely to ensure its attainment. The peculiarity of that plan consists in limiting the interest of the piece, in a great degree, to the developement of some one great passion in the principal character, and in exhibiting this passion in all the successive stages of its progress, from its origin to its final catastrophe. It does not appear to us that either of these observances is well calculated to increase the effect of any dramatic production.

If any thing more is meant by limiting the interest of the piece to the consequences of a single passion, than is implied in the vulgar rules for preserving unity of character and of action, we are inclined to think, that something more is meant than can very easily be justified. The old maxims evidently require the predominancy of certain motives in the minds of the leading characters, and a certain consistency in the sympathies that are excited by their fortunes. To carry these restrictions still farther, and to confine the whole interest of the story to the developement of a single passion, seems to us to be altogether impracticable, and could not even be attempted, in a very imperfect degree, without violating that unity of action by which the general effect of the piece would be very materially impaired. To confine the attention, and tie down the sympathies to the observance of one master passion through a whole play, is plainly impossible; first, because that passion, in order to prove its strength, must have some other passion to encounter and overcome in the bosom where it is at last to reign; and, secondly, because a certain portion of our sympathy must necessarily be reserved for the fate and the feelings of those who are the objects and the victims of this ruling passion in the hero. The first partition of our sympathy is altogether unavoidable; and Miss Baillie herself has accordingly been forced to submit to it. *Count Basil* is distracted between love and a passion for military glory; and the interest and sympathy excited by the whole story, may be referred to the one passion, just as properly as to the other. *De Montfort* is represented as struggling between a high sense of honour, and a frantic and disgraceful antipathy; nor could the latter have been made interesting in any degree, unless our sympathy had first been very powerfully engaged for the former.... The second division of interest that is claimed by those who inspire or oppose the domineering passion of the chief personage, is scarcely less necessary. We

cannot easily sympathise with a lover, unless we take some concern in the object of his attachment; and are seldom much offended by the oppressions of a tyrant, when we do not enter very warmly into the feelings of those whom he oppresses. The only way in which the interest we take in the story can be in any degree engrossed by the hero, is to provide him with a succession of inferior patients and observers, through whom he moves in the grand career of his passion, and who are successively forgotten for the sake of those who replace them. By this contrivance, which is but seldom practicable, it is very obvious, however, that the interest of the piece is impaired and dissipated, and the unity of the action entirely broken....

The peculiarity of Miss Baillie's plan, however, does not consist so much in reducing any play to the exhibition of a single passion, as in attempting to comprehend within it a complete view of the origin, growth, and consummation of this passion, under all its aspects of progress and maturity. The plan seems to us almost as unpoetical as that of the bard who began the tale of the Trojan war from the egg of Leda;[1] and really does not appear very well calculated for a species of composition, in which the time of the action represented has usually been more circumscribed than in any other. Miss Baillie, however, is of opinion, that it will turn out to be a very valuable discovery; and insists much upon the advantage that will be gained by adhering to it, both in the developement of character, the increase of interest, and the promotion of moral improvement. We are afraid that these expectations are more sanguine than reasonable.

To delineate a man's character, by tracing the progress of his ruling passion, is like describing his person by the yearly admeasurement of his foot, or rather by a termly report of the increase of a wen, by which his health and his beauty are ultimately destroyed. A ruling passion distorts and deforms the character; and its growth, instead of developing that character more fully, constantly withdraws more and more of it from our

1 In Greek mythology, Zeus appeared to Leda, wife of Tyndareus, as a swan. Two eggs were the product of their union, from which came Castor, Clytemnestra, Polydeuces, and Helen.

view. The growth of the passion is not the growth of the mind; and its progress and symptoms are pretty conform, in whatever subject it may have originated. *Amor omnibus idem*,[1] at least, says, the poet; and it may fairly be admitted, that men become assimilated, by their common subjection to some master passion, who had previously been distinguished by very opposite characters. To delineate character, therefore, by the progress of such a passion, is like following a cloud of smoke, in order to discriminate more clearly the objects that it envelopes.

These considerations are so very obvious, that though Miss Baillie has certainly talked a great deal about tracing a passion from its origin, we are persuaded that she really did not expect much assistance from this maxim in the delineation of character. She has built, in general, upon a truer ground; and seems to have perceived very clearly the method of employing a predominating passion, so as to give brilliancy and effect to characteristic representation. This method, which, however, is by no means new, consists principally in the occasional introduction of the passion, or peculiar turn of mind, in transactions of inferior moment, and in circumstances where it does not serve at all to help forward the action of the piece. By this apparently accidental disclosure of consistency, a stamp of nature and reality is given to the whole delineation; and the glimpses that are thus caught of the hero, in the course of his ordinary deportment, serve, in a manner, to confirm those impressions that had been excited by his more studied and imposing appearances. In private life, and on trifling occasions, the splendid drapery of the passions is usually laid aside; and, if we are permitted to look in upon them in this situation, we fancy that we recognise their genuine features with less uncertainty. If care be taken, therefore, to relieve the glare and pomp of the main action, by the insertion of a few such casual incidents, we seem to be let into the interior of the character, and attain a certain familiarity with the chief personages, that renders our conception of their whole character much more lively, entire, and impressive. It is upon this principle, that the effect of most of the fine strokes of nature and of character, which occur in

1 "Love in all things the same."

the writings of the poets, will be found to depend; and it is a principle, that has been quite familiar to criticism, ever since it was illustrated by the ancient commentators of Homer.[1]

But, though Miss Baillie has not overlooked this powerful instrument, for the developement of characteristic effect, there is another, of still greater importance, which appears to be, in a good measure, excluded by her doctrine of the unity of passion. The art to which we now allude, is that by which all appearance of individual reality is communicated to an ideal personage, and the functions of a dramatic hero assigned to a living being, with the whole of whose capacities and dispositions we are made to feel that we are acquainted. This poetical deception, however, can never be accomplished by the display of a single passion, and cannot even take place, we should imagine, where such a display is made the chief object of our attention. It is to be effected, indeed, only by an occasional neglect and intermission of the principal action, and of the passions by which that action is forwarded, by the introduction of arbitrary and inconsiderable occurrences, and slight and transient indications of habits, sentiments, and failings that could not have been inferred from the conduct or emotions of the chief characters in the greater incidents of the piece. It is by these, and by these alone, that a definite object can be created for our sympathies to attach upon, and the true image of a living man be presented to our imagination. There is no man alive, of whose whole character we could judge merely from his conduct or expressions in some important transaction; and our sympathies are always, but feebly excited for those with whose internal feelings we are so imperfectly acquainted. It is not enough, therefore,

1 In his *Ancilla to Classical Readers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), Moses Hadas notes: "Like Dante and Shakespeare, Homer belongs to the ages, and in his pages various epochs have realized their own aspirations. Alexander the Great declared Homer to be the best and most reliable source of military science (Plutarch, *Alexander* 8); Horace found in him a moralist plainer and better than Chrysippus and Crantor (*Epistles* 1.2); in the 3rd century AD Porphyry saw in the Odyssean cave of the nymphs a Neoplatonic allegory (On the Cave of the Nymphs in the *Odyssey*); Montaigne finds all knowledge in him (2.36) … Pope felt that the fire which is discerned in Vergil, flashes in Lucan and Statius, glows in Milton and surprises us in Shakespeare, is found at its best only in Homer, 'in him only it burns everywhere clearly and everywhere irresistibly'" (Preface to *Iliad*).

that the qualities bestowed upon our heroes be suitable to the conduct which is assigned them, or consistent with each other. A naked combination of the qualities necessary to account for the action, will never make up the idea of a real and entire man. There must be a delineation of those, also, that are of no use at the moment, and are not necessarily implied by the presence of the leading features. Without these, an action, indeed, may be represented; but the actors will be utterly unknown, and all impression of reality, along with every emotion of individual sympathy, will be utterly excluded. A play, which discriminates its characters only by the great and leading passions that are essential to the parts they have to sustain, must be as deficient in interest and effect, therefore, as a picture which shows no more of the figures than is necessary to explain its subject; that displays the hand of the murderer, and the bleeding bosom of his victim, but omits all representation of the countenance and gestures of either or of those circumstances in the surrounding scenery which may suggest aggravations or apologies for the crime. By the plan of Miss Baillie, however, these subordinate and arbitrary traits of character appear to be in a great measure excluded. Her heroes are to be mere personifications of single passions; and the growth and varied condition of one grand feature is to be incessantly held out to our observation, while all impenetrable shade is to be spread upon all the rest of the physiognomy. Among the debasements of modern tragedy, against which Miss Baillie declaims with so much animation, there is none, perhaps, so material as this, which her doctrine has so evident a tendency to sanction; nor is there any thing by which the writings of Shakespeare, and Beaumont and Fletcher,[1] are so remarkably distinguished from those of the latter dramatists, as by the individual truth and completeness of their representations of character. They are all drawn with the full lineaments, and just proportions of real men; and, while the qualities, by which their conduct is to be determined, are marked with sufficient boldness and vivacity, the subordinate attributes are not forgotten, by which we recognise them to be

1 Francis Beaumont (c. 1584–1616) and John Fletcher (1579–1625) were English dramatists and occasional collaborators.

creatures like ourselves, and are enabled to attach our feelings upon some definite and tangible object.

As to the *moral* effect of the drama, conducted upon this or upon any other plan, we confess that we are disposed to be very sceptical. Those plays are the best, we believe, that have done the least harm. The display of great passions is apt to excite an admiration which is not always extinguished by a fictitious view of their tragical effects; and the exhibition of interesting occurrence may sometimes beget a disgust and contempt for the insipidity of ordinary life. There is something of cant, however, in this also. Plays have, for the most part, no moral effect at all; and they are seen or read for amusement and curiosity only; and the study of them forms so small a part of the occupation of any individual, that it is really altogether fantastical to ascribe to them any sensible effect in the formation of his character.

But even if the case were otherwise, and we were to believe all the pretty things that have been delivered by our essayists as to the moral effects of the stage, we really do not perceive that Miss Baillie's plan of composition is at all likely to forward that great and salutary object. It is her persuasion, it seems, that, 'looking back to the first rise, and tracing the progress of passion, points out to us those stages, in the approach of the enemy, where he might have been combated most successfully, and where the suffering him to pass, may be considered as occasioning all the misery that ensues.' Now, though this observation sounds tolerably well when taken in the abstract, it unfortunately fails altogether in the application. The greater part of the passions that are made use of in the drama, are laudable in themselves, and only become vicious in their excess; while, at the same time, their progress is so gradual, that it is frequently almost impossible to say where they ought to have been arrested. To look back to the first rise of such a passion, therefore, will be of no use to us in any case; since it is not till long after that period, that it can become an object of jealousy or alarm; and since the occasions and stages of its increase are so complicated and multiplied, that it must often be impracticable to settle where the vicious series begins. The passion itself, too, may often be confirmed, before it indicates any tendency to

evil; and the warning of the drama must either come too late, or lead us to repress some of the noblest and most generous propensities of our nature. The love of Count Basil, for instance, for an accomplished and virtuous princess, has nothing in it that should lead the readers of that tragedy to stifle such an honourable and successful passion in their own bosoms, or to shut the avenues of their hearts to the approaches of beauty and merit....

In all such cases, the shades, by which a passion graduates into criminality, are so fine, and the temptations and apologies by which its seductions are made effectual, so variously and nicely adapted to the circumstances of the imaginary character, that it is impossible to suppose, for a moment, that any one can be taught to guard against them by the peculiar incidents of one dramatic representation. Every one knows, that violent passions are apt to hurry men into crimes and improprieties; and this vulgar lesson, which surely stands in no need of illustration, can scarcely be brought more home to our feelings by a drama, which can never accommodate its fable to the particular character and situation of individuals.

If there be any passions to which Miss Baillie's dramatic warnings can be applicable, they can only be those therefore, that are intrinsically and fundamentally vicious, and against the remotest approaches of which we ought to be continually on our guard. Hatred, jealousy, envy, and some others, are in this class; and it may be conceived, that, to trace these to their origin, may contribute to the preservation of our morality, by enabling us to detect them in their rudiments, and to resist them in their infancy. It has happened, however, that Miss B., by a very singular infelicity in the execution of her plan, has been at the trouble to trace the origin and progress of love and ambition with great care and exactness, while she has only given us a view of hatred in its matured and confirmed state. She has taught us, in this way, how to distinguish and resist the first symptoms of those passions, which, in their beginning, are neither criminal nor dangerous; and has left us altogether without any instructions for combating or discovering those other passions that are never for a moment either innocent or satis-

factory, and against the first dawnings of which our conscientious vigilance should have been directed. Basil and Ethwald are made to run their whole career of love and ambition before us, while it is almost impossible to say at what period their passions become criminal; while De Montfort presents himself, in the very first scene, the victim of a confirmed and inveterate hatred. If Miss B. really believed that her readers would be better able to resist the influence of bad passions, by studying their natural history and early symptoms, in her plays, she ought certainly to have traced this of hatred to its origin, more carefully than any other, since there is none of which it would be so desirable to cut off the shoots, or extirpate the seeds, at the beginning....

Upon the whole, then, we are pretty decidedly of opinion, that Miss Baillie's plan of composing separate plays upon the passions, is, in so far as it is at all new or original, in all respects extremely injudicious; and we have been induced to express this opinion more fully and strongly, from the anxiety that we feel to deliver her pleasing and powerful genius from the trammels that have been imposed upon it by this unfortunate system. It is paying no great compliment, perhaps, to her talents, to say, that they are superior to those of any of her contemporaries among the English writers of tragedy; and that, with proper management, they bid fair to produce something that posterity will not allow to be forgotten. Without perplexing herself with the observances of an arbitrary system, she will find that all tragical subjects imply the agency of the greater passions: and that she will have occasion for all her skill, in the delineation of character, and all her knowledge of the human heart, although she should only aim (as Shakespeare and Otway[1] have done before her) at the excitation of virtuous sympathy, and the production of a high pathetic effect. Her readers, and her critics, will then discover those moral lessons, which she is now a little too eager to obtrude upon their notice; and will admire, more freely, the productions of a genius, that seems less incumbered with its task, and less conscious of its exertions....

Upon the whole, we think there is no want of genius in this book, although there are many errors of judgement; and are persuaded, that if Miss Baillie will relinquish her plan of producing twin dramas on each of the passions, and consent to write tragedies without any deeper design than that of interesting her readers, we shall soon have the satisfaction of addressing her with more unqualified praise, than we have yet bestowed upon any poetical adventurer.

3. *Imperial Review* 1 (March 1804): 335–44

... The sex of the author is a consideration which must enhance our estimate of the measure and the force of her genius. A female writer has many impediments to surmount before she can rise to a given height in literature. These should be allowed to bespeak for her an equal share of encouraging partiality with an author of the other sex, whose circumstances had precluded him from the benefit of early instruction. We are far from thinking that either man or woman should be trained with a view to prompt and determine them to future authorship; but the different mode of education which is adopted to prepare them for the separate duties in life, should choice or accident afterwards lead them into the walks of literature, is wholly in favour of the former, and enables him to start from vantage ground. His youth is devoted to the study of the ancient masters and models of composition: he is regularly exercised in style, and apprenticed to the mechanism of versification: his mind is enriched, and its powers are kept in action, by scientific views of the nature of man and the world which he inhabits; and all those stores are liberally replenished, from which the illustrations of the philosopher, or the imagery of the poet, may afterwards be drawn. But these advantages a female must fabricate for herself; and, if she has either perseverance and resolution to do so, or if her genius burst forth without them, its flight is to be hailed with all that cheering indul-

1 Thomas Otway (1652–85), English dramatist, was best known for his tragedy *Venice Preserved* (1682).

gence, which, on account of the hindrances that opposed their outset, we are ready to yield to a Burns,[1] or (*maximo intervallo fecundus*)[2] a Bloomfield.[3] Here, however, where no such indulgence is required, we must transfer all we should have given in this way as an additional tribute to our admiration of that native strength, which, without the usual aids, could soar to so lofty an elevation....

If our author's plan were less stiff and perceptive it would perhaps be more effectual even for instruction. We should therefore rejoice to see her relieved from its rules: for though we perceive no constraint arising from it in her past productions, this only tempts us to exclaim, 'if she can move thus in trammels, how will she appear when at large!' Under the control of principle so excellent, and so sweetly seasoned with the spirit of that religion for which, even in a Play, her veneration appears, she may, with perfect security, trust her genius to range at will through every subject, and through every careless and unstudied variety of plan. A mind so prepared has only to charm, and it must instruct.

We derive a more particular satisfaction from so rare a combination of splendid talent and virtuous principle, at a time when the public have been insulted with effusions of female sentiment, creating an abhorrence and alarm, but partially relieved by the impotence and inferiority of genius which they evince.

We shall now offer a few remarks on each play in their order.

The first exhibits the domineering sway and impetuous operation of love, in a mind of masculine and heroic strength, but altogether unaccustomed to such feelings, and unguarded by experience against their fatal effects. We see it rush into the soul with sudden and resistless fury; destroying the tone and balance of its faculties; overwhelming every consideration of duty; and bending, for a time, even the master passion before it. We see this passion resume its power, with a recoil proportioned to its forcible suppression; and in the shock which it occasions, the catastrophe is rapidly, but naturally, produced. The plot is simple and one; and the interest, unless where we felt it languish, in the conference between the duke and his minister, strong and progressive through the whole. The author has, perhaps, succeeded best in those scenes where the hero, forgetting his new passion, is made to act in the original greatness of his character. We, at least, were powerfully affected by the suppression of the mutiny; and we envy little all the enjoyments of that mind which could remain unagitated by the scenes that close the piece. With respect to the characters, we were, on a hasty perusal of this play, struck with the same objection, which we see, from a note to the first act, had been successfully pressed upon the author by a friend. We thought the instantaneous rise of so ardent a passion inconsistent with the dignity and wisdom of the hero's character: and, though easily conceivable in some "unfledged ensign," who ogled the fair spectators as he carried his colours into country quarters, we thought it a hard exertion of faith to believe, that a Wolfe[1] or an Abercromby,[2] under all the counteracting influence of high responsible situation, should be so unhinged by a window-glance, as to suspend the march of an army when every thing depended on its advance. We now, however, retract this objection, and congratulate the author on returning to her original idea, which she had surrendered, in her second edition, to that of her friend; but which proceeds, in our more matured opinion, from a profound and penetrating acquaintance with the human heart. Love makes ever the most violent ravages, and puts on the most foolish and doting appearances in minds the least accustomed to it; in the bashful old bachelor, or the literary recluse, who have not been in the early habit of a companionable and easy intercourse with women. A soft look, at some unlucky moment, suddenly awakens a belief, the proudest which the heart of man is formed to cherish, that they

1 Scottish farmer and poet, Robert Burns (1759-96).
2 "Fruitful after a great interval."
3 English shoemaker's apprentice and versifier, Robert Bloomfield (1766-1823).

1 James Wolfe (1727-59), who had risen rapidly from the rank of ensign to major-general, died engaging Montcalm on the Plains of Abraham.
2 Most likely Sir Ralph Abercromby (1734-1801), who led the British forces in Ireland in 1797 and died commanding an expedition to the Mediterranean.

are objects of a tender regard: strange, but delicious agitations, coming with the greater welcome as they come late, betray them into a situation which is new and perplexing, and which destroys all sense of prudence and propriety. To such a class of characters, Basil, who is represented as a soldier even to pedantry, evidently belongs. "To men like you," his friend observes, "if love should come, he comes no easy guest:" and his mistress says, "There is something strange in this man's love I never met before." From such a peculiarity, we may account in the most natural manner for his sudden captivation; for the absurdity of disclosing the state of his heart to a supposed stranger in a mask; for the repetition of his mistress's words, which is, however, carried somewhat beyond probability; and for his ridiculous terror at giving her offence; which, had he been as well versed in women as in war, he would have known was never caused by extravagant admiration. Of the other characters, the duke and Gauriecio rank, perhaps, too nearly with the common-place villains who are always at hand to help on a dramatic plot: and we could have wished that the heroine had not been so deeply tinctured with coquetry, which, if it add to her idea something of airy elegance, takes in proportion from the soft and tender interest she inspires. The language possesses pathos, variety, and vigour. We regret that the author thought it necessary to measure out the whole in lines of ten syllables; for, where the dialogue is colloquial or playful, it is impossible to maintain the dignity of English blank verse; and as, in reading, these passages must be converted into prose, they should, perhaps, have been so in writing also. Obsolete phraseology, and modes of eking out a verse, borrowed from the age of Shakespear, occasionally offend us. We find "no tale to earn a sugar plum *withal*:" "*for that* (because) I am his friend:" "passing sure;" "soul distraught;" with awkward expletives, lame lines, and words arbitrarily accented. Perishable writers may be suffered, without danger of doing harm, to trick themselves out in "antique ruff and bonnet:" but the anxiety we feel for the progressive refinement of our language and versification, obliges us to warn an author, whose works posterity will read, if posterity partake of human nature, against giving up, as of no value, any ground which the genius and judgment of two centuries have laboured to gain.

The next play, a Comedy on Love, we read with more amusement than admiration. We were amused, as we should be by the hoyden waggeries of holiday misses; or, by a caricature of follies, to which we had seen some faint resemblance in real life. The dialogue has more liveliness than elegance; and the manners, though diverting, are deficient in delicacy. We have abundance of the Wrongheads and Foppingtons, but look in vain for a Clarinda or Lady Townly.[1] The behaviour of the misses, with a view to mortify the selfish coxcombs, appears too rude and impudent; and the mutual sarcasms of the gentlemen too coarse for modern customs to admit. Neither are we quite satisfied with the character of the hero. He is represented as a young man bred up in London, and on a companionable footing with fops of fashion; yet he falls in love as instantaneously as his counterpart in the tragedy, with a girl, whose appearance is by no means seducing. On her part the attachment is equally sudden; and, before their acquaintance is two days old, we find them as familiar as if they had been playmates from the cradle. In the course of the hero's probation, where he appears almost a Patient Grizzel[2] in breeches, we see his passion surmount the evidence of ill temper and selfish extravagance in his mistress, yet subdued in a moment by a single instance of calumny. We own ourselves at some loss to perceive so rapidly the line of distinction between these vices. Calumny is a breach of truth and justice; but ill temper naturally betrays us into expressions which are false and unjust; and from the latter, when matured by indulgence, the former may justly be dreaded. We do not complain that probability is violated, because Harwood stops short on the detection of wickedness in his

1 Characters from contemporary plays: Sir Francis Wronghead from Colley Cibber's (1671–1757) *The Provoked Husband* (1728); Lord Foppington from Sir John Vanbrugh's (1664–1726) *The Relapse* (1696); Clarinda from Benjamin Hoadly's (1706–57) *The Suspicious Husband* (1747); and Lady Townly from *The Provoked Husband* (1728).

2 *The Pleasant Comedy of Patient Grissel* (1603), a play based on Chaucer's *The Clerk's Tale*, was written by Thomas Dekker (c. 1570–1632) in collaboration with Henry Chettle (c. 1560–c. 1607) and William Haughton.

mistress; but because the same moral delicacy does not lead him to pause, at least, on his conviction of her fury, meanness, and extravagance, which are the legitimate parents of wicked conduct. A grammatical inaccuracy has escaped the author, where she says, "Let Eston and I (me) go into the closet." This, though not unfrequent in female conversation, yet, being put into the mouth of one of the heroines, who is not characterised by similar slips, we presume was not intended. In spite of these objections, however, we read this play with continued interest.

We come now to the tragedy on Hatred; and gladly re-enter the native element of the author. Here we have powerful conception of character, and masterly expression of passion. We have simple sublimity of language, towering generosity of sentiment, and all the pathos of keen and clinging attachment. A picture is given, severely true to nature, of a wretched man, who labours under a species of that partial and incipient mania so exquisitely described by Professor Stewart,[1] in his chapter on an ill-regulated imagination. A rooted loathing, and resentful disgust, contracted in youth for one of his companions, which "grows with his growth, and strengthens with his strength,"[2] at last takes such exclusive possession of his mind, as to mingle with every thought, and master every action. Continually agonized by this baneful passion, he draws its nourishment from the slightest incidents, and dwells with excruciating ingenuity on every idea which can sharpen its exacerbations, and augment its force. His busy and distempered fancy spins a web of gloomy thought around him, where, shut out from the cheerful light of day, and rejecting every comfort Providence has bestowed, he broods in misery of his own creating, till, exasperated by mortifications he had himself provoked, and stung with doubts he trembles to probe, he is driven to a deed of complicated horror, and an agony of remorse snaps the lacerated thread of his existence.

A sort of dread disastrous light is skilfully spread around this piece. The characters are strongly and distinctly marked. They come forward to the eye as we read. We insensibly "body forth

1 Scottish philosopher Dugald Stewart (1753–1828). See introduction.
2 Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man* 2.135.

their form and pressure,"[1] and see them move before us, as on a darkened stage, while we shudder at every step, with the horrid anticipation of some unholy deed. To impose a frame of mind so suited to her purpose attests the magic power of the poet.

In this drama a lesson of high utility is taught. It warns, with an awful voice, the votaries of gloomy sensibility not to suffer any single idea of an unpleasing nature to rest too long in their minds. It warns them to resist its first approaches, and, by forcing themselves to partake the comforts and the duties of life, to vary the paths of reflection, and preserve all the chords of the soul in unison....

Our objections to this play are few, and we hazard them with hesitation. We find some difficulty in reconciling the different parts of the hero's character. In the account which he gives of the origin and growth of his antipathy, we perceive it founded on a puerile lust after universal estimation, and a spiteful envy of his antagonist; "who, even from childhood, withheld the fair respect all paid besides." He is a Haman, who can enjoy no peace while a single Mordecai refuses his homage. With that low and little passion perpetually working at the bottom of his mind, which could hardly fail to meet with mortifications from more quarters than one, and to influence his actions in various ways, how are we to account for the correct and dignified conduct he has maintained to the middle period of life, and for the uniform esteem and approbation of all who knew him, and chiefly of his penetrating sister? In all the character of Rezenvell [sic], too, we apprehend some incongruity may be discovered. From the generosity of his behaviour on different occasions, from his eagerness to embrace his rival, in the reconciliation scene, and from the profound admiration he entertains for Jane, we should not have expected the taunting pleasantries and pestering visits with which he teases and inflames the mind

1 Most likely the reviewer is loosely quoting Hamlet's advice to his actors: "Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'er-step not the modesty of nature: for any thing so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as't were, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure" (3.2.18–26).

of Monfort. What had passed between them should, in a disposition that was really desirous to avoid a renewal of the scene, have dictated a guarded and forbearing respect. If it be urged, that his former manner was continued with a generous design to persuade his antagonist that all past offences were forgotten, and to conceal their quarrel from the world, the plea will not suffice, as he could not fail to observe the indignation and disgust his levity excited in the mind of Monfort. The picture of Jane is admirably executed, and we tremble to touch it. Yet why is she represented as verging into autumnal virginity? "Time" is said "to have laid his hand on her, though lightly;" and she herself exclaims, "but now the wane of life comes darkly on." Her beauty is frequently vaunted; but a defect in youth is a defect in beauty.... We are not quite convinced that we should have been so industriously prohibited from imaging Jane of a more lovely age; which would have added probability to the suspicion her brother conceives of an attachment between her and Rezenvell. The proofs of such an attachment are abundantly slight to weigh even with a mind so maddened as that of Monfort. On this point, however, we strongly suspect ourselves of error, and doubt not but many may consider the very circumstance we have questioned as throwing a rich and mellow lustre of grace, and majesty, and interest, around this exquisite picture.

We must again object to moulding such conversation, as that of a footman taking furnished lodgings, into blank verse:

> "The house is in most admirable order.
> —Go you, and wait below till he arrives.
> Indeed, my friend, I'm glad to see you here,"

This, however, is made up for by another servant, who describes the appearance of the heroine in language rather too poetical:

> "As she moves,
> White flows her robe in many a waving fold,
> As I have seen unfurled banners play
> With the soft breeze."

Is not some poverty of invention betrayed, by introducing a second duel, with the very same circumstances which accompanied the first? And is not the author open to a more serious charge, for teaching that a man, though harbouring the most abominable passion, may live in the enjoyment of universal veneration and esteem, only to be interrupted by a concurrence of untoward accidents, which few have reason to dread? This, and the example in Basil of a self-destroyer who falls with dignity, and is entombed with honour, we regard, notwithstanding the explanation contained in the preface, as important defects. The young and enthusiastic, whose minds receive the deepest impression from plays, are seldom the readers of prefaces....

4. *Dramatic Censor* (April-May 1800): 112-64

[Thomas Dutton (b. 1767?) wrote the following eight reviews of the Drury Lane theatre's performances of *De Monfort* between April 29 and May 9, 1800 in the *Dramatic Censor, or, Weekly Theatrical Report.* They form a comprehensive and interesting narrative of a serious play's struggle on the late eighteenth-century British stage. The play was adapted for performance by J. P. Kemble (1757-1823); he also played the title role. Amongst letters and other items of interest of Baillie's housed at the Royal College of Surgeons of England is the plot summary from this series of reviews (Slagle 1:80).]

DRURY-LANE, TUESDAY, April 29, 1800.

The sanction of KEMBLE's *fosterage* to a Tragedy, which had already acquired no inconsiderable degree of celebrity among the fashionable circles, in its *pristine* state, by the circumstances (involving an air of mystery) under which it was originally produced, naturally wound up public expectation to its highest pitch, and rendered the Lovers of the Drama eager to witness the result of this combination of talent, on the part of the writer, and the adapter of the Play.

The literary reader scarcely need to be informed, that the *printed* Tragedy, on which Mr. KEMBLE has employed his prac-

tical skill in scenic representation, is one of a series of Plays, illustrative of the passions, published without the name of the author, but tacitly acknowledged to be the production of a female writer, and generally attributed to the pen of Mrs. HUNTER, the widow of the late celebrated anatomist. This report has recently been contradicted, and the Play in question is now referred to Miss BAILEY, sister to the physician of that name; Mrs. HUNTER, who originally suffered herself to act as a screen to her friend, generously disdaining, after the success the Play experienced in the closet, to imitate the *jack-daw*[1] in the fable, by placing to her own account the merit due to another.

Hence it appears, that to appreciate the merits of the new Tragedy, as a dramatic composition, and to award a righteous verdict on the respective claims of both parties concerned in its production, it is essentially necessary to compare the Play, as now *acted* (with Mr. KEMBLE's alterations) at Drury-Lane, with the original, as *written* by Miss BAILEY. With this view, we have endeavoured to procure the printed copy, but have not been successful in our attempt, the Play, it seems, being out of print. We hope, however, in the course of the ensuing week to obviate this difficulty, and to be enabled to bring the Tragedy to the test of fair criticism, with respect to the individual merit or demerit of the author and the adapter; and shall, therefore, postpone till next week that thorough investigation and *analysis*, which, but for the reasons already assigned, we should now enter upon.... Mean while, we shall content ourselves with generally observing, that the success of the Play depends more, in our humble opinion, in the exquisite acting of Mr. KEMBLE and Mrs. SIDDONS, than on its own intrinsic merit. The language is, indeed, chaste and elegant; the diction elevated and impressive, without becoming turgid, vapid, and bombastic; and the sentiments are delicate and natural. But the Piece wants interest—it wants variety—it wants activity—it is too barren of incident—and very little art has been employed in the conduct of the plot. It is, likewise, independant of these negative disqualifications, liable to stronger objections, in a moral and dramatic light, than any Theatrical production we have of late witnessed. These objections, we fear, are inherent, constitutionally inherent to the Piece, and therefore irremediable. This consideration causes us more deeply to regret, that men with Mr. KEMBLE's powers, should employ their talents upon improving the crude conceptions of others, instead of trusting to the resources of their own minds, and drawing upon the stable bank of their own genius. It is not in the nature of things for discordant elements to assimilate: a drama, constructed on this principle of *participation*, seldom exhibits the appearance of a perfect *whole*: it seldom discovers unity of design or execution; but, with very few exceptions, betrays its *double* parentage.

N.B. Our remarks on the performers are, together with our *Analysis* of the New Tragedy, reserved for next week.

DRURY-LANE, WEDNESDAY, April 30, 1800.

The new Tragedy experienced considerable curtailment on the second representation, the leading features of which we shall detail in our next. We were particularly pleased with the omission of the scene which ushered in the fourth act, in which a new performer, under the title of a *screech-owl*, bore a principal part. But the piece is still much too long, and would receive great additional improvement by totally rescinding the part of *Conrad*, who is only an incumbrance to the Play. Various other alterations are necessary to take off the heaviness of the Tragedy, by shortening the term of its duration.

DRURY-LANE, FRIDAY, May 2, 1800.

When we last week deferred our strictures on this Play, we were in hopes of obtaining an opportunity of balancing the respective claims of the Author and the Adapter, by comparing the printed *original* with the *representation*. In this hope, however, we have been disappointed, the Tragedy being out of print, and either lent out to read, or not composing a part of the cat-

1 Crow. Probably a reference to the fable of the jackdaw decked out in peacock's feathers.

alogue of the different circulating libraries to which we have applied. We have, therefore, no alternative left, but to proceed upon the same principle on which we have acted in similar cases, and which we laid down in our remarks on Mrs. INCHBALD's *Wise Man of the East*[1]—See the satirical Poem, entitled *The Apparition of Zoroaster, to the Theatrical Midwife of Leicester Fields*, page 73—

> "*Be this a truth to all Play-mongers known,*
> "*Whatever they adopt, becomes their own.*"

Applying this principle, therefore, in its most unlimited extent, to Mr. KEMBLE, we must hold that gentleman equally responsible for what he *retains*, as for what he *adds*. Vested with full power of *rejection* or *admission*—holding, as it were, the keys to *lock out*, or *let in*—he must equally participate in the *censure*, or the *praise*, due to the work to which he lends his sanction, and his fosterage.

We shall not enlarge upon the plot, which, as we have already observed in our last, is barren of incident, and, therefore, unworthy of minute detail. The language, likewise, has been sufficiently animadverted upon. It exhibits many specimens of a refined and classical style; but this is a recommendation ill calculated to compensate, especially with an English audience, who delight in bustle and intricacy of situation, for the want of interest and variety. In this respect, the new Tragedy partakes of the characteristic features of the French Drama, where declamation supplies the place of incident, and complicate developement of plot.

The *characters*, then, will form the leading topic of our disquisitions in the present instance; and, in this point of view, we are sorry to say, we never saw a Tragedy more woefully deficient, more culpably ill-conducted. *De Montfort*, the hero of the piece, is a systematic villain, without one *foil* to his vices. His

1 Elizabeth Inchbald (1753–1821) translated Kotzebue's (1761–1819) *The Wise Man of the East* (1799). Thomas Dutton, editor of the *Dramatic Censor*, wrote *The Wise Men of the East, or the Apparition of Zoroaster, the Son of Oromases, to the Theatrical Midwife of Leicester Fields*, a satirical poem on Mrs. Inchbald.

hatred towards *Rasenfeld* is not the passion of a great and generous soul: it originates in a mean sordid jealousy; he challenges his rival to personal combat, and owes his forfeit life to the forbearance of his adversary. Yet this magnanimity, on the part of *Rasenfeld*, has no effect on the impenetrable feelings of *De Montfort*: his hatred now grows more fierce and implacable; yet, strange to tell! black and deadly as the Author represents that hate, it is almost instantly soothed and appeased by the intreaties, not of a mistress, but a sister. A reconciliation next takes place, through that sister's intervention—with what sincerity, on the part of *De Montfort*, we leave our readers to judge—when, at the very moment that he professes friendship, he refuses to ratify those professions by a friend's embrace. A few hours after this event, this magnanimous man, this reconciled enemy, suffers himself to be wrought up to such a paroxysm of rage and revenge, by a forged and clumsy tale (to which he lends an eager ear with a degree of credulity, bordering upon weakness, that tends to render his character still more despicable), that, forgetful of oaths, protestations, and every tie which honour and duty can impose, he challenges his rival under his own roof; and, when the latter nobly declines the contest with a mad-man, displays himself not only a villain, but a rank coward, and resolves upon assassination. He perpetrates the murder—not in the moment of passion, but cooly, deliberately, and by plan—and now, instead of being held up to detestation, he is extolled as a paragon of virtue, and a long harangue made on his noble qualities, not one of which he demonstrates by his actions. Instead of incurring the punishment of his crime, and being made an example to society, he is relieved from ignominy, dies of a broken heart, and is pompously lamented, instead of being execrated and despised. So much for the *morality* of the Drama; not to mention the absurdity and absolute contradiction, in attributing such fine feelings to a man who could descend to such meanness, such cowardice, such base and infamous villainy.

Rasenfeld possesses some *traits* of nobleness and magnanimity; but his character is unnecessarily degraded, and lessened in esteem, by the petulance of his disposition. He, likewise, betrays

a want of caution, incompatible with just delineation of character, in exposing himself to the danger of assassination, after the emphatic warning given him by *Count Albert*, and which so perfectly corresponds with the behaviour of *De Montfort*, that *Rasenfeld* instinctively exclaims—"Sure, he will not *murder* me!"—to which *Albert* makes reply, by observing, that he will not be answerable for the consequences; at the same time plainly intimating his suspicions of foul play.

Jane De Montfort is a true romance-heroine, who deals in sentiment by wholesale, and makes a long preachment to palliate murder, and depicts an assassin like a saint!

The rest of the characters are mere *cyphers* in the account. In fact, the Tragedy of *De Montfort* is a true *family*[1] Play, the avowed aim of which seems to have been the exhibiting of the *KEMBLES to advantage, by putting an *extinguisher*[2] on all the rest of the Performers.

As for the Play itself, it is difficult to ascertain to what class of the Drama it properly belongs. The bills of the Theatre announce it under the title of a Tragedy; but, baiting the heaviness and dull solemnity of the piece, it seems to be a heterogeneous compound of Tragedy, Comedy, Farce, Opera, Pantomime, and Puppet-Shew; in which dancing, feasting, revelry, *drunken songs*, screech-owls, murders, funeral processions, music and lamentations, are promiscuously jumbled together. It has all the dullness of the *Laureat's*[3] late production, without half its merit.

1 Sarah Siddons (1755–1831) and John Philip Kemble (1757–1823), both renowned tragic actors, were brother and sister, children of Roger Kemble (1721–1802), a travelling theatrical manager. Sarah's success on the stage gave John his first opportunity to act, and on September 30, 1783 he played Hamlet at the Drury Lane Theatre. Most noted for his bulk, their brother Stephen Kemble (1758–1822) was able to play Falstaff without any stuffing, and their other brother, Charles (1775–1854), distinguished himself in comedy and later was appointed Examiner of Plays (censor). The family would soon grow larger. Maria Theresa de Camp (1773–1838) later married Charles, and they had two children, Frances Anne (1809–93), an actor, and Adelaide Sartoris, a singer.

2 To appreciate the full impact of the metaphor here, we must realize that extinguishers in the eighteenth century were the commonplace conical caps used to extinguish candles or lamps.

3 Henry James Pye (1745–1813), poet laureate just prior to Robert Southey (1774–1843), was not highly respected as a writer.

Among the Perfomers, Mr. KEMBLE takes the undisputed lead. His acting is the chief recommendation the Play possesses. Mr. TALBOT[1] has the next best *male* part, in which he acquits himself with address; and would succeed still better, if he did not, by an affectation of ease, degenerate into slovenliness. His pronunciation is distinct, but rather too flippant.

Mrs. SIDDONS, as *Jane de Montfort*, has ample scope for her powers; but she is apt to fall at times into *rant* and exaggerated declamation. We must, likewise, notice an impropriety in her dress, which destroys the illusion of the scene. She is very anxious to have an interview with her brother, without being known to him; and for this purpose asks the *Countess Albert*, whether *masks* will be worn at the entertainment, where she proposes to meet him? The *Countess* replies in the negative, but recommends to her to conceal her face in the *double* foldings of a veil: a proposal in which Lady Jane cheerfully acquiesces. She makes her appearance, however, soon after, with no other concealment than a *single* veil, of so *thin* a texture, that all her features are recognized; nor does she even attempt to disguise her voice. Yet this clumsy stratagem imposes on *De Montfort*, and prevents him from knowing his sister.

DOWTON's[2] character of *Jerome*, is a palpable copy of *Adam* in the *Iron Chest*,[3] and the performer overacts his part in a manner, which completely turns into farce. BARRYMORE[4] has little

1 Born in Boston, Montague Talbot (1774–1831) forfeited a substantial inheritance from his uncle by choosing a life on the British stage. He made his first recorded Drury Lane appearance on April 27, 1799. However, his "trifling air" and "girlish form," as described by John Wilson Croker in 1804, disqualified him from competing with John Philip Kemble as an actor of tragedy. After his performance in *De Monfort* as Rezenvelt, unable to maintain his position on the London stage, he moved to Dublin, where he directed various theatre companies and became popular as a comic actor.

2 William Dowton's (1764–1851) 36-year career at the Drury Lane Theatre began as Sheva in Richard Cumberland's (1732–1811) comedy, *The Jew* (1794), on October 11, 1796. Dowton was considered to be a versatile actor who excelled as Malvolio.

3 George Colman the Younger (1762–1836) wrote this dramatization of William Godwin's *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* in 1796 at the request of Richard Brinsley Sheridan. It was first performed at Drury Lane Theatre on 12 March 1796.

4 William Barrymore (1759–1830) played Count Albert. He first appeared at Drury Lane Theatre on October 3, 1782 where he performed for most of his life. His

or nothing to do, but to strut upon the stage; and CAULFIELD's[1] part, as *Conrad*, is an absolute excrescence, which not only requires the pruning knife, but ought to be totally lopped off.

Miss HEARD[2] appears in a very grand and elegant dress, as the *Countess Albert*; but has a very insignificant part to sustain. She seems, in fact, like the rest of the performers, unconnected with the KEMBLES, to be introduced for the express purpose of serving as a foil to the *family*. This Actress has, latterly, laboured very assiduously, and almost constantly, in the dramatic vineyard, her name, with very few exceptions, being in every bill, either in the Play or Entertainment, and not unfrequently in both. It is to be hoped, that the Proprietors do not confine their notice of her *usefulness* to the imposition of additional labour, without having due respect to the well-known aphorism—"*the labourer is worthy of proportionate hire!*"[3]

The scenery to the new Tragedy reflects great credit on the artists. The interior perspective of the convent, in particular, ranks among the grandest scenes the stage can boast. We have only to regret, that the piece is not more worthy of the embellishments bestowed upon it.

*The part of Rasenfeld was originally intended for Mr. C. KEMBLE; but that gentleman being prevented from acting by indisposition, the character devolved upon its present representation, Mr. TALBOT.

most effective role was Osmond in Matthew Lewis's (1775-1818) *The Castle Spectre* (1798).

1 Thomas Caulfield's (1766-1815) acting seldom rose above journeyman performances. Though popular for his comic roles, he may have fallen into contemporary obscurity had it not been for his much publicized, lengthy affair with Maria Teresa Bland (1770-1838), a singer of considerable reputation. Caulfield later found more appreciation for his acting in the United States.

2 Elizabeth Heard (c. 1775- ?) was the daughter of poet and dramatist William Heard, who abandoned his training in medicine to write. He only wrote two weak plays: *The Snuff Box; or, A Trip to Bath* (1775), a comedy, and *Valentine's Day*, a musical drama performed at Drury Lane on March 22, 1776. Elizabeth Heard was considered a reliable and natural actor, but she was mysteriously dismissed from Drury Lane after the 1800-01 season.

3 Luke 10.7.

DRURY-LANE, SATURDAY, May 3, 1800.

It may justly be considered as a bad omen of the success of the new Tragedy, when it is found necessary to call in the aid of such a vile *farrago*[1] of folly and absurdity, as the Entertainment of this evening. The crowded houses, and unbounded applause, with which *De Montfort* continues to be received, are unhappily confined to the *Play-bills*. The *Theatre* exhibits "a beggarly account of empty boxes!"

Mrs. SIDDONS fatigued herself so much with her exertions, in the character of *Jane De Montfort*, that she was unable to speak the *Epilogue*. An apology was accordingly made for its omission, and very favourably received by a drowsy audience, who were happy to find the Tragedy had reached its conclusion.

DRURY-LANE, MONDAY, May 5, 1800.

If Mrs. Siddons, who took her benefit this evening, placed her hopes of success on the attractions of the new Tragedy, she was woefully deceived in her appreciation of its merit. She was honoured with a fashionable, but not a numerous house.

DRURY-LANE, TUESDAY, May 6, 1800.

[No specific comments on the performance.]

DRURY-LANE, WEDNESDAY, May 7, 1800.

To judge from symptoms, which grow more prominent and alarming every night, the new Tragedy has not much longer to linger out a miserable existence.

DRURY-LANE, FRIDAY, May 9, 1800.

We have been favoured with the loan of the *original* of the

1 A confused mixture or hotchpotch.

Tragedy, by a kind friend, whose urbanity blends the scholar with the gentleman, and to whom Dramatic Literature, in particular, is under the greatest obligations. We profited of this opportunity to compare the play, as *printed*, with the *representation*, and find, that all the objections, which we pointed out in our last Number, are imputable to the *author*—are inherent to the *original*. This remark is not meant to exculpate Mr. KEMBLE from that share of censure which attaches to him, as the *adapter*, from that obloquy, which he voluntarily inherits and entails upon himself, by his *adoption* of a faulty offspring. It were to be wished, that he had allowed himself greater latitude and scope in the exercise of his own judgement, and made freer use of his critical prerogative. With very few exceptions, he has confined his amendments to the rectification of occasional *grammatical errors*; among which, *here* instead of *hither*; *there* for *thither*; the confounding of the *preterite* and *participle*; with various other inaccuracies ... called particularly for his correcting hand. All the heterogeneous ingredients in this dramatic compound; the spurious leaven of farce, opera, pantomine, and puppet-shew, so copiously kneaded into the dough of Tragedy, are furnished by the author; who, in the *introductory discourse* to the *series of plays*, of which *De Montfort* forms a part, expressly lays it down as a rule, that show, sing-song, battles, screech-owls, banquets and processions, are the *legitimate* and *necessary* substitutes for *plot* and *incident*; adding withal, in compliment to the good sense and understanding of the audience, that these are things from which *children* receive great pleasure and edification!

The principal, or at least the most characteristic alteration, which Mr. KEMBLE appears to have introduced, respects the last scene in the Third Act, where *De Montfort*, under the impression of *Conrad's* tale, that *Rezenvelt* has gained the affections of his sister, challenges that nobleman to personal combat. In the original, *Rezenvelt* accepts the challenge, and a second time disarms his adversary, whose life he spares, but refuses to return his forfeit sword.

——————"I'll take away your sword;
"Not as a mark of *disrespect* to you,

"But for your *safety*——By to-morrow's eve
"I'll call on you myself, and give it back;
"And then, if I am charged with any wrong,
"I'll justify myself.——Farewell, strange man!"

Mr. KEMBLE makes *Rezenvelt* decline the challenge. He tells *De Montfort* to find out some free, some untried arm; some adversary, against whom he had not that very morning sworn never more to raise his arm in anger. "To such a one," he says, "you may again be a trifling life in debt!—again acknowledge, and again forget!—I'll not be guilty of your perjuries."—This conduct, on the part of *Rezenvelt*, undoubtedly displays a dignified and manly mind; and possibly many of our readers will agree with us, that his refusal to fight *De Montfort*, together with the taunts which accompanied that refusal, must have a greater tendency to inflame *De Montfort's* hatred, and prompt the assassination of the man, who denied him the means of *open* revenge, than had he a second time been the debtor of *Rezenvelt's* generosity—had he a second time owed his forfeit life to his forbearance.

The Glee in the Third Act is the composition of Mr. Shaw,[1] and is worthy of that gentleman's professional celebrity. It receives due credit and effect from the manly voice of Mr. SEDGEWICK.[2] As the *Glee* is not printed for the accommodation of those who wish to hear the *words* as well as the *notes* of a Song, we subjoin a copy——

"Pleasant is the mantling bowl,
And the song of merry soul;
And the red lamps' cheery light;
And the goblets glancing bright;

1 Thomas Shaw (d. 1830), violinist, conductor, and composer, began his career at Drury Lane, composing music for some of its extravaganzas. Later he became the theatre's orchestra leader and part proprietor. Though prominent enough to be visited by Haydn in 1791, he experienced financial difficulties in 1798 because Sheridan failed to pay him regularly. He ended his life in obscurity as a music teacher in Paris.

2 Thomas Sedgwick (d. 1803), actor and singer, debuted at Drury Lane Theatre on October 25, 1789 in a song with Michael Kelly and Anna Maria Crouch.

Whilst many a cheerful face around
Listens to the jovial sound.
Social spirits, join with me;
Bless the god of jollity."

Mr. KELLY[1] furnishes the music to the *Dirge*, or *Requiem*, in the Fourth Act, which is entitled to considerable praise for richness of harmony, and appropriate solemnity.—The following is a copy of the words—

"Departed soul! whose poor remains
This hallowed lowly grave contains;
Whose passing storm of life is o'er,
Whose pains and sorrows are no more!
Bless'd be thou with the blest above,
Where all is joy, and purity, and love!

Let him, in might and mercy dread!
Lord of the living and the dead!
In whom the stars of heaven rejoice,
To whom the ocean lifts his voice,
Thy spirit purified to glory raise,
To sing with holy saints his everlasting praise.

Departed soul! who in this earthly scene
Hast our lowly sister been,
Swift be thy flight to where the blessed dwell!
Until we meet thee there—farewell! farewell!"

The Prologue to *De Montfort*, if we are rightly informed, is the production of the Honourable FRANCIS NORTH.—The Epilogue is attributed to the elegant pen of the DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE.

1 Michael Kelly (1764?-1826), Irish actor, singer, and composer, trained with Gluck and Mozart. He first appeared at Drury Lane on April 20, 1787 where he later held the position of musical director, setting to music such works as Sheridan's *Pizarro* (1799). He was a constant presence in English opera until 1808.

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